

To taste your beating heart by CeruleanHeart

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Summary:

“Steve realizes that Billy's tears are something he was never supposed to see. He knows that he should have looked away when he had the chance. But it's too late now...”

One night Steve sees something he shouldn't have and now he finds he can't think of anything else but Billy Hargrove. He can't look at anything else either. Oh no, this is not a crush, it will go away...

Steve thinks he might be losing it and Billy isn't helping. Not one bit.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Hi everyone and thanks for reading! I hope you're enjoying my take on this pairing.

This is my first fic for this fandom so let me know what you think! Your comments and kudos are greatly appreciated.

Sometimes Steve has a hard time believing that he's spending his weekends with a bunch of kids now.

Sure, they love him like a big brother and he gets to be the cool guy, giving dating advice and stuff... And yeah, he likes those weird little buggers more than he would've admitted maybe a year ago or so, but when exactly did he lose all of his friends that are his age?

Oh right. After Nancy. And after goddamn Billy Hargrove, who came rolling in from California one fine day and seems to have no other goal in life than to outdo him.

Steve is parking in front of the guy's home right now, watching Max walk to the front door, she's the last kid he's dropping off tonight. It's a small house, bungalow ranch style, no garage, and it's so painfully working class it makes him feel uncomfortable in his BMW. Billy's flashy Camaro is parked right behind him, like a nasty reminder of his existence in this world and Steve can't wait to get away from here. So as soon as Max turns around to wave goodbye from the opening entrance door he steps on the gas and drives off.

He's five blocks away when he notices that she's forgotten her skateboard on the backseat. With a sigh he stops. Sure, he can just give it to her on Monday before school starts but she's probably going to miss it dearly until then.

Steve is way too nice for this world, he thinks, when he turns the car around and drives back. Someone should give him a medal or something.

Steve parks on the other side of the street, grabs the skateboard and

walks up to the house. Max's likely already waiting for him. He's maybe three steps away from the screen door that leads up to a freshly painted porch, when a commotion arises from the inside of the building and he stops dead in his tracks.

There are two male voices yelling at each other and then a loud smack like someone is hitting a punching bag, followed by the screeching of furniture moving across a wooden floor.

Oh fuck, fuckfuckfuck! Steve doesn't wanna witness a family fight but before he can scam, light goes on in the hallway and the sound of angry steps is coming his way.

He's too far from the car to get back unnoticed but there's a big mushroom shaped bush on his right, so Steve sprints and make it just in time before the screen door flies open with a bang and Billy Hargrove comes storming out.

Of course, the guy manages to ruin yet another Saturday night without even knowing Steve is around. He ducks behind the bush and watches the scene in front of him, transfixed.

Billy is wearing a tank top and sports shorts and nothing else. He's barefoot and walks a little bend over, holding the left side of his face. He stops right in front of the Camaro, under a street lamp and then just stands still. His shoulders are shaking and after a few seconds Steve can hear a loud sob.

Oh shit, he really wishes he hadn't come back now.

A figure appears in the doorway and Steve hears a calm, cold men's voice.

"William. You're coming back here. Accept your punishment like a man."

Steve has to swallow hard. This is not good, this is not good at all, this is very bad.

In front of him Billy turns around and under the light of the street lamp Steve can see the trails of tears shining on his cheeks. He can also see the fear in his face. Billy is terrified, his whole body is trembling.

"I'm waiting." the man, his father, says.

And Steve hears the distinct clinking of a belt buckle being undone and the smooth swish of leather on fabric. And even though he cannot see Billy's father against the light, he knows that he's winding his belt around his hand and he knows what he's going to use it for. Steve has seen shit like this in movies but never, never ever in real life.

His eyes are still fixed on Billy and he watches the boy blink and now there are more tears rolling down and dripping from his chin. Billy lowers his head and then says in a voice that's so small, so frail and so vulnerable that it breaks Steve's heart:

"Yes, sir."

This is not a one-time thing, an ugly voice in Steve's head whispers, this is learned behavior, this is something Billy has been taught through pain and fear. The boy walks back slowly and Steve has never seen him look so young, so human.

He feels like the ground is breaking away from under his feet and he needs to sit down because this is too much for him to stomach. He cannot even wrap his head around what's happening because if there's one thing in this world he has been sure of, absolutely sure of, it was knowing who Billy Hargrove was.

Steve realizes that Billy's tears are something he was never supposed to see. He knows that he should have looked away when he had the chance.

But it's too late now and he's alone here in the dark with all that knowledge, with this terrible secret. And he's painfully aware that he can't tell anyone about it because if he does all hell will break loose over him, over Billy and over Max. This is the kind of secret that destroys lives and homes and people and it belongs to Steve now and only him. He feels sick.

After a while he scrambles to his feet, leaves Max's skateboard behind on the lawn and goes back to his car. He drives home with clammy hands and a big lump in his throat.

So that's what they call domestic abuse? It's always been an abstract concept for Steve, who grew up in a sheltered and loving home,

something you read about in the newspaper from time to time. It's most definitely nothing that has ever happened to him or anyone he's ever known.

Until now. Until Billy.

He turns on the TV, when he comes home trying to distract himself but it doesn't help. He can't think of anything else while he's watching reruns of "I love Lucy", he can't think of anything else while he's brushing his teeth, he can't think of anything else when he lies in bed.

And the last thing he sees after he closes his eyes and before he falls asleep is Billy Hargrove's tears.

Sunday comes and goes and later Steve doesn't remember anything about it, except the dread of having to go to school the next day.

Billy comes to school on Monday with sunglasses and his signature sleazy grin.

He wears a black eye like a medal and a rumour spreads like wildfire about how he beat up a guy that was hitting on his date. The girls are fawning over him with excited little giggles when he passes by and the guys high five him when they meet him walking down the hall. Everybody likes a bad boy.

Steve watches him from afar and he cannot look away. Now that he knows, everything about Billy makes so much more sense, his cocky arrogance, the overbearing self-confidence, the constant aura of aggression around him, his poorly veiled anger. And most of all his persistent antagonism to Steve, who, he realizes now, has everything Billy will never have.

Steve looks and looks, his eyes follow the other boy wherever they

can, trace every little motion every smile, every frown. He maps his injuries: the black eye, the split lip, the way Billy sometimes twitches in pain when he moves his left arm.

He looks so much that Hargrove cannot help but notice it after a while.

He frowns, the first time their eyes meet during lunch and the second time, when Steve is switching classrooms he sees a glint in Billy's eyes a moment before he bumps his shoulder into Steve's so hard it almost knocks him over.

"Ooops!" Billy smiles "Didn't SEE you there Harrington."

Steve's tongue is tied by his secret and his embarrassment so he just staggers off to trig, grateful beyond measure that he's not taking that class with the other boy.

He tries to focus on the problems on the blackboard but his thoughts are spinning back to Hargrove all the time.

He knows, doesn't he? Steve is going to pay for what he's seen.

He ruffles his own hair until it stands up in wild tufts. He tells himself he's being paranoid, that there's no way in hell Billy could suspect anything. Everything will be ok, his weird obsession is gonna pass, he will forget soon enough, he just needs to get his mind off of this for a bit... Oh God, he's never gonna forget, right? The memory has etched itself into his mind and somehow it's more terrifying than the demo-dogs.

They were monsters and he thought so was Billy Hargrove but the boy is human, goddamit he's human and he goes back to that home every day and nobody knows just him and Steve and a father who hits his own flesh and blood and maybe even worse.

Steve doesn't want to know anymore, he can't handle this secret. It's fucking killing him.

The teacher has to call his name three times before he realizes he's being talked to and the entire class is laughing as he fails to solve the math problem in front of everyone.

Later, when school's over and Steve is walking to his car he sees Billy again, slouched against his Camaro, wearing a wicked grin.

He blows Steve a kiss right before he's about to pass him and that hits Steve much harder than the shoulder bump earlier. He feels a blush creeping up his cheeks and flees ears between his shoulders. When he's finally safe inside his Beamer he knocks his forehead against the steering wheel, once, twice, thrice to get Billy Hargrove out of his head. Billy, Billy, Billy. But it doesn't work.

He's all over the place for the rest of the day. He drops stuff and stares at things for minutes trying to remember what he was doing with them. He reads the same paragraph three times before the words register in his brain, then he gives up on English homework.

For dinner they're having steak, fries and fresh veggies because his parents are home for a change. His father has brought a folder from work to the table and his mother is half way through her first bottle of wine.

They eat in silence but it doesn't matter because Steve doesn't really taste the food anyway.

He thinks about the kiss Billy's thrown him earlier and how the only time he's known whether the guy was trying to piss him off or flirt with him was when he bashed his face into a pulp at the Byers' house, laughing like a maniac.

But that wasn't about Steve, not really, he was just collateral damage that night. It was about Max, the one thing he couldn't lay hands on. Billy's directly passing down the blows he receives at home to anyone but her, Steve knows that now with terrifying certainty.

He'd looked so dressed up standing in the driveway, smelling of cheap cologne, his hair styled to perfection, the shirt unbuttoned almost to the navel even though it was already November. Like he was going on a date... Billy's a real ladies man, so he probably was, right?

But instead of getting laid he got into a fistfight with Steve, the second best option to relieve tension. For a moment he remembers how smooth and warm the skin of Billy's chest felt when he tried to push him and told him to get out, shortly before things escalated and

then how it still has that slightly golden tint from the California sun when Steve sees him in the shower. Oh.

Steve's fork misses the meat on the plate and connects with the china in a loud clink that startles his parents' meditation over their things.

"Are you alright, honey?" his mother asks "You barely touched your food."

Steve realizes he's sweating.

"I think I caught a bug or something. Can I get up? I wanna go to bed early." he lies.

"Sure. It's probably best to just sleep it off." She says with a smile and squeezes his hand. His father is still looking at his numbers and just nods absentmindedly.

"Yeah. Sleep it off. Sounds like a good idea."

But Steve can't sleep. He tosses and turns until his bedsheets are tied into knots and when he finally does doze off he dreams about Billy Hargrove dealing out punches in the shower, naked. Somehow his focus has shifted. Steve wants to die.

The next morning he tries to convince his mom that he's deadly ill and won't ever be able to go to school again but she doesn't believe him and makes him go anyway.

Steve decides against skipping classes after he spends what feels like an eternity staring at the school gate pondering whether to get out of the car or not. But he's too scared of losing his BMW privileges if he gets caught, so with a heavy heart he shoulders his backpack and takes a deep breath of cold winter air before he steps into the hall.

By now the rumours about Billy's fight have blown up to ridiculous dimensions because bored teenagers are stupid enough to believe just about anything. Apparently Billy has battled an entire biker gang

now and didn't only save an innocent girl but the entire town from their evil conduct.

Steve suspects Billy is feeding the rumours and it makes him hate him to the extent that he feels like throwing up. The bigger Billy's lies get the heavier his secret weighs on Steve's shoulders.

He doesn't even understand why. Why the fuck?! He didn't freak out about Barbara like that and that girl was DEAD. But she was simply gone, like she never even existed, he didn't have to look at her every day at school, knowing things he couldn't tell anyone.

He wants to tell someone, so bad. SO BAD. But he doesn't know how, it's not like he can walk up to Max and be like: "Hey, so I noticed your step dad hits your brother." What if he beats her too?

His relationship with Nancy is a liliitle bit too strained right now to ask her for advice on how to process being a witness of domestic violence or knowing a victim for that matter. And he doesn't really talk to Tommy and Carol anymore.

Also, he's scared of the consequences and he can think of so many, so, so many consequences and not just for him. He's a coward and that's disappointing because he's managed to be brave in the past.

With a sigh he closes his locker and leans his forehead against the cold metal shutting his eyes, just for a second. It feels nice against his skin.

Overthinking things isn't Steve's style and this whole mess is starting to make his head hurt.

Someone slams into the locker next to him, shaking the entire block and the scent of cologne and cigarettes tells him exactly who it is.

"What do you want, Hargrove?" he says weakly without opening his eyes.

"Oh your Majesty, I beg your pardon doth thou not wishest to look at a lowly peasant?" Billy mocks in semi correct Shakespearian.

He nudges him in the shoulder so Steve has to turn around and look at him.

He's made of a broad grin and sharp teeth and even sharper eyes that look like they could cut Steve right open, right here and tear all his

secrets out of his chest.

Ironically the black eye suits him, it adds to his rough charm and close up like this being devoured by his mocking blue eyes Steve totally gets why the girls are all over him.

“Fuck off.” He says but it comes out wrong, more like a plea than a command and for a moment Steve can see confusion on Hargrove’s handsome face.

“Huh. Hope I didn’t knock all the fight out of you, Harrington.” he sneers “Because I came to inform you that I’m going to kick your ass during basketball later.”

Oh godfuckingdammit they have practice today.

Billy leans in and their faces are so close now that Steve can feel his warm breath on his lips, the moisture coming from within his lungs. He’s pretty sure, if he would breathe in through his mouth now he could taste his last cigarette. And that’s a crazy thought, Steve is clearly losing it.

“It’s no fun knocking you around when you’re not putting up a fight, princess.” Billy whispers.

For some reason the husky sound of his voice gives Steve butterflies and he sucks in air sharply through his lips and the cigarette taste is there as well as the faint echo of fresh sweat on Billy’s skin. They sit on the tip of his tongue making him dizzy and he’s already forgotten what Hargrove is talking about so he only says:

“Yeah.”

But he thinks *‘I know your tears, Hargrove.’* and it fills up every corner of his mind.

“The fuck?” Billy pulls back looking at him with irritation “Did I give you brain damage, Harrington?”

“I think so.” Steve says in a daze and that’s actually a very good explanation for what is wrong with him. He pushes himself off the locker he was leaning against and walks away feeling strangely serene, leaving Billy behind with a dumbfounded expression on his

face.

The daze wears off way too fast during world history because they're talking about Killing Fields and that gives Steve a pretty rough reality check.

He needs to get his shit together and stand up to fucking Hargrove, abuse victim or not, or else he's gonna go coo-coo.

Steve braces himself for their scheduled stand-off like a soldier would for battle.

But when basketball practice comes around they're divided into groups by surname for a change, which means Steve and Billy are on the same team. Hargrove, Harrington.

And that's proof for Steve that God exists and that he loves him because this way he won't have Billy up against his body all the time pushing him, taunting him, being way too physical. Also, they're on the shirts on team which adds to his relief.

Hargrove is making a sour face and shoots him angry looks because he was looking for a fight. Passing down punches, right? But now he has to play nice if they don't want to lose. And if there's one thing Steve is certain of it's that Billy hates losing more than he loves bullying him.

It turns into a competition anyway about who's scoring more points and they fight over the ball like lunatics until they're dripping sweat and their gym clothes are sticking wet against their bodies. But neither of them is backing down and by the end of the class Steve thinks he's gonna pass out, that's how hard he's panting and how much the stiches in his side hurt.

But their points are tied, their side has won and on top of that Billy looks just as destroyed as him so it's totally worth it.

The team comes together in a rough group hug to celebrate their victory and in the middle of everyone yelling "Good game!" and "That was tubular!" Billy grabs Steve and pulls him close so their bodies are flush against each other.

For a single insane moment Steve thinks the other boy is gonna kiss him but instead he presses their foreheads together, like they're good

friends and not mortal enemies, and he whispers:

“Next time I’m gonna fucking tear you apart.”

And because Steve is high on adrenaline and he doesn’t know what’s good for him he answers:

“I wanna see you try.”

Bill laughs and licks his lips, with an almost obscene look in his eyes like he’s tasted something delicious and forbidden. There must be 10.000 volts of electricity running between them waiting to discharge in an epic, cataclysmic thunderstorm.

Steve wonders if he just asked Billy Hargrove to fuck him because as he finally pulls him in for a real hug and pats him on the back like a good buddy, he feels the boy’s lips graze against his ear and there’s the slightest hint of teeth and tongue and it makes the hair on the back of his neck stand up.

Without thinking twice about it, Steve skips the shower and runs home to safety in his sweaty gym clothes. Maybe, if he’s lucky, he’ll catch pneumonia and dies.

The house is deserted and dark and he’s grateful for not having to deal with his parents.

He takes a very long, very hot shower and jerks off with nothing short of desperation to finally relieve some of the tension that has built up inside of him.

Steve concentrates hard on thinking about the sexy poster girl on the wall of his room and nothing else but if he slips just for a second and remembers the sensation of Billy’s lips against his ear, that’s definitely not what makes him come. Honestly.

2. Chapter 2

The following day Billy starts to haunt him. Steve knows it's because he senses his distress and savors it with malicious glee. He waits for him in the school parking lot in the morning and Steve can't walk fast enough without running to escape him.

Hargrove wraps one arm around his shoulders and forces him to slow down to his own sauntering pace. Billy and he are about the same height but the other boy appears bigger in comparison and he's way stronger than Steve.

"I missed you in the shower yesterday, pretty boy." He murmurs into Steve's ear as he leans the head against his. His curls are very soft on Steve's cheek and today for some reason he smells more of cologne than cigarettes. "You're not turning shy on me now, are you? After everything we've been through?"

He lifts up his free hand and shows Steve the backside of it so he can see his knuckles and the healing splits on them from when Billy almost punched him into a coma. It's weird they're still there because Steve's injuries are almost completely gone. But Steve's got a Dustin, who puts ice on his head and colorful band aids on his cuts and tells him that he's put up a good fight, even though he got his ass kicked. Billy's got no one like that. Somehow that takes the edge off his obvious threat and it makes Steve feel brazen.

He turns his head and because Billy is so fucking close, the corners of their mouths are touching when he replies.

"You need to stop picking at your scabs, idiot."

Billy laughs and ruffles Steve's hair so violently, his scalp is burning.

"Good one, Harrington."

He lets him go and finally strolls off but not before turning around one last time, saying "See you later." with a lewd smile and a wink.

And that is how the haunting begins because suddenly Billy is

everywhere. He hovers near Steve whenever they're outside the classroom, brushing by, locking their eyes, talking too loud so that Steve must hear him. They don't have a lot of classes together but in the ones they do, he suddenly sits next to him with the grin of a great white shark.

When the teacher isn't looking, he throws little paper balls in the gap between the collar of the polo shirt Steve wears under his sweater and his neck. The guy's aim is so good, it turns Steve into a human salt mine. He tries to fight back but he misses most of the time and that makes Billy snicker so he has to stop unless he wants to risk getting them both in detention. Spending extra time together, after school, stuck in one room? No thanks.

Steve would bet his ass off that all this is punishment because Billy caught him looking over the last two days and he didn't get to crush him during basketball. The fact that he has learned what turned the guy into such an ass doesn't make this any easier.

Later that day and mostly because Steve has stopped sitting with anyone in particular during lunch, Billy simply kicks the next random kid across the table from Steve off the bench and plants himself in front of him.

"What are we having for lunch?" he shows Steve his teeth in a way that would be a smile on a normal person and drums his hands on the table.

It's pizza day at the cafeteria but Billy doesn't look like the kind of guy who brings lunch money. At least not his own.

"Go starve!" Steve snaps but faster than he can look, Billy has snatched his coke can and puts it to his lips. He drinks in big, greedy gulps and when Steve leans across the table to reclaim it, he uses the opportunity to steal the pizza slice from the plate with his free hand. Now Steve's got a can that's three quarters empty and Billy's got his food. Damn, he's good. Steve wants to scream but that would mean giving the jerk satisfaction, so he just glares as he takes a big bite and eats all the cheese off HIS slice.

Billy chews with his mouth open and tosses the left over humiliated

piece of tomato sauce covered bread back at Steve.

“Mmmmh. It’s finger lickin’ good.” He laughs and then he puts one finger after the other in his mouth and pulls it out again, slowly, with a wet pop and shiny with spit. His lips are plump and very pink. Billy’s eyes never leave Steve’s who watches with his jaw on the floor. He’s pretty sure if this right here doesn’t count as sexual harassment, nothing does.

Besides that, he’s got no fucking clue what the hell is happening right now.

When Billy is done ruining Steve’s lunch, he simply gets up and waltzes off without another word leaving the other boy behind, speechless.

The spectacle hasn’t only caught Steve’s attention. Suddenly he hears Nancy who seems to have magically appeared next to him.

“What in god’s name is going on with you and Billy Hargrove?” she asks sounding completely weirded out.

And Jonathan, who Steve didn’t even register was there as well, says.

“You’re not still gonna eat that, right?”

Steve says he’d rather shoot himself in the head.

The last hours of school turn out to be surprisingly Billy free. Steve hopes he’s finally bored with teasing him and has found someone else to torture. He’s willing to count that as a victory and his reward for staying so calm during lunch. So when he catches himself glancing around for the other boy despite all that, he tells himself he’s just being wary.

It comes back to bite him, of course. For when he scans the parking lot after school, you know, just in case and to stay alert and shit, he finds Billy immediately.

He sits on the hood of his Camaro, his legs spread wide and between

them he's got a cute brunette with a skirt that's way too short for this time of the year. They're talking and she's playing with his necklace while he's casually got his hands on her ass.

Quickly, Steve turns away from the scene with a mix of disgust and something else he can't quite identify and rushes to his BMW. Fucking Hargrove and his bitches, like that's gonna impress him.

But he can't resist one last glance over the roof of his car, before he gets in and regrets it instantly. Because over the girl's shoulder he meets Billy's eyes, bright with triumph. He flicks his tongue at Steve and his right hand slides under her skirt where it gives her butt cheek a good squeeze.

Steve's heart skips a beat and he feels his face heat up. He hates Hargrove almost as much as he hates himself for looking.

But on his way home he realizes that he basically didn't think about last Saturday night at all today so this is kind of an improvement. Maybe if he manages to get Billy off his back he'll also get that shit out of his mind. It's none of his business anyway. Hargrove can go to hell for all he cares.

Pat Benatar is singing on the radio and Steve hums along. *We are young...*

Over dinner he muses about all the ways he can ignore Billy tomorrow and smiles to himself. That's gonna show the jackass for getting cocky like that just because Steve has spared him a glance or two.

When his mom asks him if he had a good day, he shrugs. Well, he clearly had worse. His step is light when he climbs the stairs to his room.

He should really, finish his math homework because that's the first subject tomorrow but instead he starts thinking up pithy comebacks just in case the ignoring Billy plan falls through.

He ponders over what to wear to school, maybe not a polo shirt again because some of the little paper balls have made it all the way down into his Calvins. No wait, screw that! He needs to wear a polo shirt more than ever now. He's not gonna let some dimwit with a mullet

dictate his fashion choices.

Billy likes to pick up girls? Cool, so does Steve. Let's see who scores the hotter chicks.

Steve is done making excuses for that smug piece of white trash. The game is on. It's so fucking ON.

Does Billy have a thing for brunettes, tho?

Thursday, Steve feels a lot better already. He's slept well.

He arrives at school with a mental list of the Hawkins High girls whose hearts he hasn't broken yet.

That means Amy, Laurie and Becky are out of the question. Samantha doesn't look half bad but she wears black exclusively and listens to weird British bands. She's something for a freak like Jonathan, in case things with him and Nancy aren't working out. Tina and Vicky are sluts so Steve is pretty sure Billy already had at least one of them and he's not taking that guy's seconds. He's hung out with Nicole a couple of times so that sounds like an option. He doesn't really like her tho, she's kind of a bitch. What about that girl who's around Nancy sometimes? Whatshername. Ally? She's pretty cute. A bit on the curvy side but Grade A boobs.

Steve checks his hair in the rear-view mirror. Damn, he looks fine today.

There's no sign of Billy anywhere, so that's a bit of a let-down but he's gonna make it work, the guy's probably just late.

He sees Ally walking up to the school building and jogs after her. She's already at her locker when Steve catches up.

"Hi!" he smiles and runs a hand through his hair.

"Hi, Steve!" Ally blushes. See? He's still got it.

"Ally, right? So uhm, I noticed you're taking the school bus this

morning. How come a pretty girl like you doesn't have someone to pick her up?"

"Oh." She says, clearly flattered "I don't know."

"Well in case you don't wanna go back in that piece of junk, I can give you a ride home. And maybe do something together after school?"

There's no way she's gonna say no. Steve's Beamer has fucking leather seats and a pretty sweet stereo. He watches Ally in anticipation as she closes the door. She bites her lower lip.

"Steve, are you trying to use me as some kind of rebound?" she asks and cocks her head. Steve feels his face fall.

"What."

"Because you see, Nance and I maybe aren't BEST friends but we're still friends. So no way, thanks."

"Jeez. I just asked you to hang out, not marry me! Don't get your panties in a twist." Steve snaps, angry and humiliated.

"Yeah? Why don't you ask Billy Hargrove? You two seem to get along great." She nods at something behind him and walks away.

What the hell? Steve turns around, slowly. But he already knows what he's gonna see. Billy's leaning against his locker with the most wicked smile Steve has ever seen on a living creature and that includes the demogorgon. He wonders how long the jerk has been watching. Long enough to see Ally turn him down, that's for sure. Long enough even for her to notice him.

Wait, are people talking about them? What is going on?

He stomps off to math, fuming and confused.

It's alright, he tells himself. He's still got Nicole as a back-up. All he needs to do is pull himself together and get back on top of this.

But more than that, he needs to piss. Steve's had two coffees this morning to get all pumped up for today's challenge. So 20 minutes

into class he gets a hall-pass.

He picks the boy's room near the library. It's smaller but less frequented and only half as dirty as the one down the hall. Steve is wearing nice shoes today so he'd like to pass on stepping in pee. When he opens the door it's like Karma smacks him right in the face. Hargrove is there, caught in the middle of lighting a cigarette that's hanging from his mouth.

"Look at what the cat dragged in." he grins.

Walking away is not an option. He's got to play it cool. Steve strolls past Billy to the urinals.

"Don't smoke in here." He says in a dismissive tone.

"Sue me." Hargrove flicks open his Zippo and lights his cigarette.

"Saw your little show earlier, Harrington." of course Billy has to rub it in Steve's face, what a dick. He leans against the sink, holding the cigarette loosely between his fingers. "Want some advice?" he blows smoke in Steve's direction.

"No." It's hard to piss when someone is talking; it makes it creep right up again.

"You gotta shed that preppy image, pretty boy. Gotta get some dirt on your hands, know what I mean?" he takes another drag.

"Whatever." Steve thinks of waterfalls and raindrops and finally he can empty his bladder.

"See this right here?" from the corner of his eye Steve can see him pointing at his shiner with the glowing end of the cigarette. "Drowning in pussy. Did you hear how I got it?"

Now the image is back in his head, of Billy under the street lamp, of his father's silhouette on the porch. Steve had it packed away neatly somewhere in one of the darker corners of his mind. It stings like an acid bite on his soul.

"Yeah..." Steve scoffs, trying to fight the image back to where it

belongs “Like anyone would believe that.”

He pulls up his fly and flushes but when he turns around, he bumps into Hargrove, who’s suddenly way too close again.

“Are you calling me a liar?” he says in a low, calm voice that makes shivers run down Steve’s spine. But he’s not calm at all. The muscles in his jaw are twitching as he clenches his teeth, hard. He drops the cigarette and stomps it out. This is the fight that’s been brewing between them all week. This is the 10.000 volt thunderstorm. Steve knows if he backs down now, it will never end.

“What if I am?” he takes a step forward pushing his chest against Billy’s.

“Well then I’ll have to teach you some manners.”

“Like your father does it with you?”

And suddenly it’s out there, the words hanging between them like a blade.

“What?” Billy goes impossibly still.

Just like that, Steve breaks.

“I KNOW how you got your black eye, Hargrove!” he yells and now that the gates of hell have opened the words just come tumbling out. “I WAS THERE! AT YOUR HOUSE! I came back to give Max something she left in my car and I saw EVERYTHING!!”

Billy turns white, then red. His hands clench into fists and they’re shaking, the knuckles standing out bone white.

“Is that why you’ve been staring at me all the time?” he hisses, murder in his eyes.

Steve opens his mouth and closes it again because he realizes maybe, only maybe Billy thought he was looking because he had a crush on him.

But he doesn’t have the time to fully digest that thought because Billy is on him and he slams him into the tiled bathroom wall with so

much force, it makes Steve see stars. He's got him pinned down with his sheer strength and bares his teeth at him in a growl. There's an unholy fire in his blue eyes when he says:

"If you tell anyone... Only one word, to a single soul... I WILL destroy you. Do you hear me? I will fuck you up so bad, you'll never recover."

Steve feels the bile rising in his throat, that's how much he hates Billy in that moment. He can't believe he's felt sorry for him even for a second, that his tears have made him forget what a vicious, dangerous piece of shit he is. He wants to hurt him as much as his secret has hurt Steve during these past few days, even if it kills him.

"I don't get why your old man isn't proud of you." He croaks "You're just like him."

He knows he's firing half blind but he must've hit bull's eye because Billy's face contorts into a mask of pure rage and he raises his fist to strike with a guttural roar.

Steve closes his eyes and waits for the impact. But it never comes. Instead, he hears a loud, splintering crack as Billy's fist connects with the wall next to his ear and shatters the tiles there, tearing a hole. He blinks his eyes open just in time to see Billy pull his fist out of the hole and stagger back. He's missed him on purpose, on fucking purpose.

And suddenly there's blood everywhere. So much blood. It's dripping from Billy's fist, leaving a red trail on the floor and runs down his arm, staining his shirt and the jean jacket. The shards of the tiles have torn gaping gashes in the back of the boy's hand and the red is flowing out of them like water. Steve has never seen a person bleed so much and when the first second of shock has passed, they're both starting to scream.

All the color has left Hargrove's face and Steve can see how his knees bend for a second and he slips on the wet bathroom floor and falls, still looking at his hand. The blood is getting everywhere, on his shirt, on his pants... Steve's mind is racing, they have to stop the bleeding but as always the paper towel dispenser is empty and some

stupid kids have stolen most of the toilet paper for a prank.

Billy doesn't deserve his help but Steve has been raised better than that so he shrugs off his cardigan and pulls his polo shirt over his head. The fabric is clean and soft and Steve folds it up into a long stripe and in only two steps he's with Billy, winding it tight around his injured hand.

"We have to compress the wound to stop the bleeding!" he yells sounding hysteric and Hargrove stares at him wide eyed as Steve takes the hurt hand between his own two and holds it there, in an attempt to apply even pressure.

Like that, the silence returns to the boy's room and for what feels like a small eternity there are no other sounds than their laboured breathing and the dripping of the faucets and the thundering of Steve's own heart in his ears.

Billy breaks the silence when he says:

"King Harrington, fucking Knight in Shining Armour."

There is so much bitterness in his voice, Steve can't look him in the eyes. He stares at their hands instead and watches small poppies of blood blossom on the surface of his nice Lacoste shirt until they stop.

"Look at him, taking care of poor, abused little Billy."

"Shut up."

"I bet this makes you feel really good about yourself."

"Shut up!"

"Look at me."

"SHUT UP!!"

"LOOK AT ME!!"

Hargrove's good hand is in his hair and he yanks his head around, forcing Steve to be face to face with him. He can't defend himself

because he's still holding on to the bandaged hand, though he doesn't know why.

Billy's mouth is twisted into a hard white line and there is water in his eyes. He blinks and the tears run down his cheek in two glistening trails. His eyes are turquoise when he cries and his lashes are incredibly long and dark.

"I hate you so much." he says, his voice breaking.

"I hate you too." Steve answers.

And then they lean in and their lips meet and the 10.000 volts discharge into almost blinding, synaptic fireworks behind Steve's eyelids as they flutter shut and he lets Billy claim his mouth.

The kiss is wet and aggressive and dirty and it tastes of copper and salt. Steve has never been kissed like that; as a matter of fact he's never been kissed at all. It's always him, doing the kissing, not the other way round. And always carefully, never too much force, never too much tongue or else the girls will giggle and talk behind your back.

This kiss is all force and all tongue and it's reckless, it's perfect. It sweeps Steve right off his feet and makes him melt into Billy's chest, who's got his good arm now wrapped around Steve's naked waist, holding him in place.

And the world is perfect too because everything in it makes sense as long as the kiss lasts and it stands completely still.

When they finally break apart they're gasping for air, looking at each other with blown pupils and wild eyes. Billy is still holding Steve and Steve is still holding Billy's hand. Their lips are red and sore and Steve's cleanly shaven chin is burning from Billy's stubble.

"Steve..." Hargrove pants and that's the first time he's used his name.

"Billy..." Steve answers and he sounds absolutely ruined because his brain is so fucking high on endorphins. "Do that again."

Billy complies with a growl that sends butterflies through Steve's entire body and they're making out on the dirty bathroom floor until

the bell rings and they hear the feet of the other students stomping down the hall.

Steve drags Billy into one of the stalls and lets himself be pushed up against the closed steel door. The other boy is touching him now, his good hand roaming over his chest, he bites his lower lip playfully and kisses his neck and Steve doesn't mind, he doesn't mind at all. Instead he lets himself be devoured, bares his neck for him, sighs into his kisses and he can't remember that he's ever wanted anything else from Billy Hargrove. Finally, fucking finally he's stopped thinking.

That is until some kids come in to take a leak and one of them yelps at the sight of all the blood and yells.

"What the hell? Did someone get stabbed in here!?"

Billy and Steve freeze as the world around them finally catches up with them and starts spinning again.

They hear the kids run off to get a teacher or the janitor or whatever and when they're gone Billy steps away and Steve wraps his arms around his naked torso. They look at each other in silence.

"You should probably have that looked at." Steve says after a moment and nods at Billy's injured hand.

"Yeah." he simply says.

"Ok..."

"But you'll have to step away from the door."

"Oh."

Steve does so and Billy walks past him. He stops for a second to pick up Steve's cardigan from the floor and hands it to him.

"Don't catch a cold." He says and then he leaves, taking the shirt around his hand with him.

The piece of clothing in Steve's arms is damp and has the boy's room stench stuck to it as well as a little bit of blood but he puts it on

anyway because he's never felt so cold in his life.

People are coming in now and he squeezes past them and their bewildered looks and runs. He doesn't think about anything anymore, he just runs.

Notes for the Chapter:

Dang, boys! That escalated quickly. Now Steve's shirt is ruined. lol

Thank you all for reading and special thanks to everyone who left a comment/kudos/bookmark/subscription on the last chapter.

If you'd like to please share your thoughts on this chapter with me! I'm always happy to hear some feedback. :)

PS: I hid 3 quotes from two of my favourite 80s cult movies in this chapter. If you can spot them, you're probably as obsessed with that period as I am.

3. Chapter 3

In the end Steve can't outrun his freak out. It catches up with him behind the wheel of his Beamer a few seconds after he's passed the plain little brown sign that informs him he's "leaving Hawkins". He hits the breaks and comes to a squealing halt. What is he doing? Where is he going? Did he really just try to leave town? Did he really kiss Billy Hargrove?

Oh god, they almost got to second base. Steve can still feel his hands on his skin, his teeth on his neck, their tongues entwined... How did things end up like this? What is wrong with him? Why Hargrove out of all people?

Steve's head is hot and dizzy with embarrassment. He can't even put a name to what happened between them, all he knows is that he's never felt something so intense in his whole life. Something so real. It was almost like they... no! Steve won't go there, the idea is too terrifying.

He wonders, for a second, what the other boy felt, what he was thinking when he held Steve so close and so tight. But then he remembers how Billy left him standing there, just like that. Like it didn't matter, like nothing happened. The cold creeps back into Steve's heart and spreads from there. He buries his face in his hands and slumps down against his steering wheel. For a while he just stays like this, groaning and ignoring the cars that pass him with angry honks because he's blocking the street.

He's lost all sense of time, which is why he doesn't know how long he's been moping when someone knocks on Steve's window and startle's him up from his misery. It's Chief Hopper.

"Are you alright?" he asks with a worried look.

Steve shakes his head and then follows with a hasty nod.

"No... er yes! I don't know." He stammers "I'm not feeling so great."

Hopper frowns at him and Steve hopes he doesn't think he's doing

drugs or something.

"I got a call because you're blocking the street, kid. That's dangerous. You need to get off the road. Can you drive?"

"Uh yeah, I just... sorry I wasn't thinking. You're not giving me a ticket, right?"

Hopper sighs and makes Steve pull over and step out of the car. He gives him a once over, looks over his shoulder real quick and then leans in.

"Does it have anything to do with... you know... any side effects from..." he sounds nervous, clears his throat when Steve doesn't answer right away.

"I don't... oh you mean the Upside Down?" Steve hasn't even thought of any of the past events during these last days, his mind has been completely occupied with this weird emotional mess he's gotten himself into. He suddenly feels incredibly stupid. They've escaped the End of the World by a hairsbreadths but it takes Billy Hargrove to throw him completely off the track? There's a hysterical laugh bubbling up in his throat. "Oh no. God, no! That'd be bad... haha."

"Hm, shouldn't you be at school?" Hopper looks irritated so he quickly comes up with a story that doesn't involve him and a shirtless make out session with Billy in the boy's room.

"I meant to go home because felt kind of shitty and I got a bit dizzy in the car and I must've taken a wrong turn? I think I caught the flu or something? Err..."

Hopper massages his temple like Steve is giving him a headache and lets out another sigh.

"Look, you might be surprised but I've got other things to worry about than some kid ditching school, ok? Just, go home, get your ass off the road and be your parent's problem. Can you do me that favor?"

Steve would love to do him that favor and he tells Hopper so. He's pretty sure no one's home anyway. There rarely is.

It turns out he's right, the house is as empty as always. The echoes of the sounds Steve's making when he comes in are way too loud in the solemn silence the place is wrapped in. It doesn't really feel like a home, everything's so neat yet oddly desolate like it isn't even lived in. The only signs of life are a thawing casserole next to the oven in the kitchen and a note on the fridge. His mom has scrawled down a friendly reminder that she and his father are gone till Tuesday for a big conference Steve vaguely remembers them mentioning.

He ignores the casserole, gets a Hungry Man from the freezer and throws it in the microwave. Steve's not really that, a hungry man, but he feels like he needs to busy himself to keep the silence at bay and his thoughts focused. While his food is getting nuked he finds his mom's opened bottle of wine and takes a swing. It's a nice, full-bodied red Italian.

It tastes even better when he uses it to wash down the disgusting microwave meal. He doesn't bother with getting a glass and finishes the bottle while watching some garbage early afternoon program on TV. It's only around 1pm and the corners of his mouth are already stained blue from the wine but it's probably past five in Italy so that means it's ok in Steve's book.

The alcohol makes him feel drowsy and content. He leans back into the soft couch and closes his eyes, enjoying the background noise from the TV. He's so relaxed, no wonder his mom loves this stuff it's way better than shotgunning lousy convenience store beer. He thinks he wants some more.

There's a light sway in his step when gets up to grab the next best bottle from the whine rack under the kitchen island. This one is from France and Steve finds a few seconds of amusement in thinking about how utterly bourgeois his family is. He wonders if his parents even know they grow wine in California.

Which is where Billy is from... with his suntanned skin and these stupid blue eyes that look like an endless summer sky.

It seems the wine makes him feel less embarrassed thinking about the

other boy so he lets his thoughts linger there a little longer while trying to uncork the bottle. Billy's a pretty good kisser, some of the things he did with his tounge... The cork comes out with a pop and Steve spills a glass worth of the liquid on the kitchen tiles. He can clean that up later.

...some of the things Billy did... Steve walks back to the couch and takes a big swing from the bottle. He's long washed the taste of the other boy's mouth from his with all the wine but if he closes his eyes he can still summon the memory. Cigarettes and tears and blood and Billy's sweet spit, the soft texture of his tongue against Steve's. It makes him shudder like he's freezing and burning up at the same time.

Steve touches his neck, finds the spot where the skin is sore from Billy's mouth and sticky with dried saliva and sweat. That's gonna turn into a hickey, for sure, he can already feel it bruising. The fucker has marked him like Steve is his property. Shit, that's kind of hot.

With a lazy sigh Steve opens his cardigan, finds the places where Billy has touched him, where the ghost of his hand still lingers. He feels delirious, his skin tingles, his stomach flutters, there's no doubt he's got a fever. Also, he's getting hard.

Steve's hands have a will of their own, they slide down his belly, find the zipper of his slacks and their way into his underwear where one of them curls around his growing erection. Billy's hand had been big and warm and slightly calloused and Steve imagines what it would feel like around his cock. It makes his breath hitch, sends a tingle down his spine and straight to his dick.

He remembers Billy's body fitting against his almost perfectly, all hard muscles and soft skin under his rough denim clothes, pressing into Steve with so much need, such urgency. How weirdly intimately he's known him even before that, from all the physical contact during practice, from the shower, naked and gleaming... Steve even has a vague idea of the shape and color of Billy's cock from quick, stolen glances when he pretends being busy with washing his hair.

He pictures it hard and throbbing, an angry red against the taut stomach of the other boy and it turns him on so much, he starts trembling, leaking precome as he lazily fucks into his own hand.

He imagines Billy's weight on top of him, pinning him down. His sweat and his body heat mixing with Steve's, adding oil to the fire of his fever. His mouth falls open with a soft moan. He's close, so close he feels the heat coiling in his belly, the pressure building in his balls.

Billy could just take him, if he wanted to, put a good hard grip on him with those strong muscled arms, make him defenseless and compliant, tear him apart, like he promised...

Steve comes hard, in hot thick spurts, toes curled, back arching off the couch, sweet, sweet pleasure showering his drunken brain like a gentle summer rain. He strokes himself through the aftermath until his dick has gone completely soft and then wipes his hand on the already soiled cardigan.

For a few moments he feels blissfully empty and tranquil. But then the wine unfolds his full effect in Steve's veins and pulls him into a warm, heavy embrace of sadness. Only when the tears start cooling on his cheeks does he realize he's crying.

He's so alone, why is he so alone, so goddamn lonely? He just wants someone to give him a hug and tell him everything will be ok, that he doesn't have to be scared of all the conflicted things he's feeling.

Even more than that he wants Billy. He must have gone crazy, because he wants him so much. The other boy hates him, he told him so and he walked out on Steve like he was a cheap whore. He hates that asshole too, but he also wishes Billy would like him. Just a little bit.

Friday somehow comes around at some point. Steve isn't sure how but suddenly it's the next day and he's nursing a terrible hangover. His head is throbbing and he wants to vomit but he can't no matter how long he sits on his mom's lush bath rug hugging the toilet.

There's no way he's going to school today. He probably has too much alcohol in his blood system still because even though he's got no recollection of how much he had to drink yesterday, the empty bottles and cans he stumbled over on his way to the bathroom speak for themselves.

It's not because he's terrified of facing Billy after what has happened yesterday. Steve isn't a baby, ok?

He spends half the day just lazing around, waiting to feel better. There's a call around noon but Steve doesn't pick up the phone, he doesn't want to talk to anyone. He doesn't want to think about anything. He needs a break right now. Man, he really wishes he'd stocked up on weed because he won't be able to drink for a while now. When he'd picked up the cans and bottles earlier the smell of beer and wine almost turned his stomach.

Shame and guilt come to Steve on soft soles, they whisper to him of all the things he'd rather forget, make his face burn and his feet twitch restlessly. He gets up his ass and distracts himself by cleaning up the rest of the mess he's made. There's cum and wine stains on the carpet and sofa and he's got to do some serious scrubbing to get everything out. He hopes his mom won't notice the faint blue stains that are all that's left from two of her most expensive bottles.

He eats from the cold casserole and spends the rest of the day feeling sorry for himself.

Saturday Steve doesn't get up to begin with. He simply rolls over and pulls the blanket over his head. No one's home anyway so why bother? He listens to the empty house breathing silence and his own slow heart beat for a while. It's nice and cozy here, warm and safe. He never wants to leave again.

Around 2pm the doorbell rings. Steve turns to the other side. The outside world can eat his shorts. It's probably the annoying lady from the neighborhood committee wanting to discuss one of their tedious projects with his parents. Steve painfully remembers that one time he answered the door and had to listen to a twenty minute monologue about the science of choosing the right color of geraniums.

A few minutes pass until the bell rings a second time. It's Saturday, for fuck's sake, how important can it be? He doesn't smell smoke and unless the house is on fire no one's getting him out of bed today. The third ringing is accompanied by someone banging on the door so

hard Steve thinks it's gonna knock it out of the hinges. He gets up after all but in a mood that's more than disgruntled and stomps down the stairs.

He opens the door in nothing but his boxers, an old oversized t-shirt and a bad case of bedhead. A decision Steve adds to his long list of regrets right away, when he sees his afternoon visitor. Billy.

"Goddammit Harrington, it's cold as fuck out here! You wanna let me freeze to death on your doorstep?" Hargrove says instead of 'Hello' and pushes his way inside past Steve without waiting for an invitation.

"Uh... hi?" Steve says dumbly. It's Billy! Billy Hargrove is in his house! Shit, Steve didn't even brush his teeth. Desperately he tries to comb his hair back with his fingers while the other boy is looking around. He's wearing a leather jacket and one of his outrageous shirts unbuttoned to the chest, like he doesn't get the concept of winter.

Sooner than Steve can tame his hair Billy seems to be done with peeking up the stairs and around the corner into the living room and out to the backyard pool, he turns back to Steve. His eye's travel down his body and then back up to his hair. He half expects a remark about his give-up-on-life style but Billy just looks and says nothing about it.

"You didn't come to school yesterday." He states instead, after a few moments of awkward silence.

"I had a temperature." The lie is well rehearsed and comes out smooth and easy.

"Thought I told you not to catch a cold."

"Yeah, turns out I'm bad at taking advice."

"No shit."

Oh god, they both sound so dumb! Steve wishes he knew what to say or what to think but he's kind of paralyzed with the surprise and his inner turmoil. He's relieved and scared and confused and embarrassed and angry and happy at the same time. It makes him

stand like a deer in headlights in the empty space between the foyer and the open plan kitchen on the right, unable to come up with a coherent sentence or to make a move.

“Your parents not home?” his unexpected guest wants to know. Steve shakes his head. No they’re all alone, just the two of them. Just Billy and Steve. Steve in his underwear, Billy in his ridiculous shirt and way too tight jeans. Two boys that almost got to second base the last time they saw each other. One boy he’s jerked off to. Steve’s tongue is made of lead.

After some more minutes of uneasy quietness Billy starts to fidget.

“I came to give this back to you.” He sounds just as nervous and insecure as Steve feels on the inside. Billy reaches inside his jacket and pulls out a soft bundle. He hands it to Steve.

“I uhm... the stains didn’t go out.” He mutters and looks away.

It’s his shirt, Steve realizes as he unfolds the bundle. It’s been washed and ironed, he can tell from the fresh smell of laundry detergent and the crisp touch of the fabric. But indeed the blood stains are there, slightly washed out but still pretty obvious. They look like a faded Rorschach test, the color of rust. His 40\$ shirt is a goner but Billy went out of his way to come to his house and return it. That’s kind of sweet?

“Nevermind.” Steve says, oddly touched “How’s your hand?”

“I’ll live.” Billy shrugs and flashes his fresh bandage for a second before dropping the arm.

“It’s just... uh... that’s a lot of blood...” Steve lifts the shirt with an arched eyebrow.

“Uhm yeah, the doctor said one of the cuts found a vein, that’s why it bled so much. But it’s not a big deal, he said I did a good job compressing the wound. I mean... you did...” Billy clears his throat and the silence between them returns.

It’s the loudest silence Steve has ever experienced because it screams with all the things that have happened between them. Things neither

of them knows how to address. So they just stand there and stare each other down until the tension becomes unbearable.

“Listen, I’m sorry ok?” Steve blurts out before he can calm his jumbled nerves “About what I said, you know about your father and stuff... And... if you want to talk or need hel...”

Oh shit, he knows he’s said too much, that he’s crossed a line again because suddenly Billy’s face twists into an ugly grin. Bad move, this isn’t going to be pretty. Out of all the things he could have said he picked the worst. Go Steve.

“Oh, you’re sorry? That’s cute, that’s real fucking cute.” Hargrove snarls “Tell you what, I don’t need your apology. And I don’t need your pity either, not from you. Not from King Harrington.”

Steve lifts his hand in defense. Fuck, he walked right into a mine field like a smiling fool.

“Come on man, calm down. It’s not pity I just thought...

“You know what I think?” Billy interrupts him, his voice springing out sharp like a switchblade “I think you saw something that wasn’t ANY of your business and now you think you know shit about me. Think I’m just some big ol’ softy on the inside, some poor misunderstand kid? Guess again!”

He’s closing in, backing Steve up all the way out of the foyer and against the kitchen island.

“Like talking about my old man so much you just can’t stop, don’t you? Well since you’re so fucking curios let me tell you something. When my mother left us he tried to raise me right. He tried to raise me to be MAN. You get that? Not some fucking wuss like you are. He’s a man of discipline and when I disappoint him, I get punished. It’s that simple!”

The words are like a slap in Steve’s face who realizes that Billy is way more fucked up than he initially thought. Defending his dad? Holy shit.

Hargrove’s got him crowded against the counter now one hand

planted on the granite slate on each of his sides and his face is so close Steve has to lean back or else their noses would touch. He can see the anger flickering in Billy's absurdly blue eyes, can feel the heat of it roll off of him in waves. Steve realizes that he went way too far in touching Billy's defenses that he's lashing out like a wounded animal.

He wishes he could turn back time, just few minutes so he could open the door again. Then instead of acting like a dumbstruck idiot he could hug Billy and tell him how happy he is that he came to him because that must've cost him so much courage. More than Steve could ever muster.

"Billy..." he says instead because he missed the opportunity to say all the right things and he can't stop his voice from shaking "... I don't wanna fight you. Calm down. Please?"

"What, you're scared now? Good. Because you should be. I'm not nice, get it? We can't be friends you and I. And I swear if you look down on me one more time I'll knock you off your goddamn throne, you conceited little brat."

Steve swallows hard. Fuck, those words really sting. If Billy wants revenge because Steve's seen him in moments of weakness, he sure is getting it.

"Is that what this is all about? Some stupid title, some status at school? You think I look down on you because of that? This whole fucking King Harrington thing is something Tommy came up with! I don't even care about all that!! I don't need it. You can have it, I'm giving it to you! Take whatever... Take it all, see if I give a fuck."

Something in Billy's eyes breaks and Steve doesn't even know what it is, he just knows it was there a second ago and now it's gone. He straightens up and takes a step back from Steve. Somehow the crazy motherfucker manages to look hurt.

"How generous. You really got everything, huh?" he says voice full of loathing.

"Fuck you." Steve doesn't have to listen to this crap. No more. He

tried to be nice. Hell, he tried to apologize. If Hargrove insists on being a goddamn mental case, who is he to stop him?

“Well thanks. Fuck you too.” Billy spats “Fuck you and your big house and your big pool and your big life. You’re simply too good for me, aren’t you?” he turns around and starts walking to the door.

Steve watches him. He knows he should be relieved that Billy is leaving, that he’s getting off lightly. He knows he should hate him or at least resent him for all the venom he spat into his soul. But this isn’t how it’s supposed to be, somehow everything came out wrong, twisted and ugly.

And somewhere in the back of Steve’s head a voice is screaming that if he lets him get away, that if Billy walks out the door now, whatever they had in those brief moments in the boy’s room will die forever. Steve doesn’t want that, he’s not scared anymore. He wants to believe that what happened between them was real that the Billy who kissed him and made him feel like the world stood still is somewhere inside that hateful boy. He wants to believe it so much, tears start to blur his vision, they burn in his eyes and make his voice crack when he yells:

“That’s your excuse?! You kiss me like that and then you push me away and tell me I’m too good for you?!” he’s crying now, openly crying but those are angry tears he tells himself, not sad tears. Ire and hurt are boiling in his veins. Billy didn’t break his heart he doesn’t have the power to do that. Steve isn’t giving it to him. “That’s so fucking lame.”

Billy stops and turns around again with an angry frown.

“Watch it, Harring....”

But Steve comes after him with a vengeance and punches him in the shoulder. Not too hard because his tears make him weak and shaky but hard enough for the momentum to take him and make him stumble into Billy. He catches Steve’s right wrist, holds it in a vice-like grip and when Steve swings his left fist to land another hit, he seizes that one too and they spin around once in a bizarre little almost-dance.

Steve struggles to pull free but Billy doesn't let him go and that's fine because he isn't done yet.

"I don't want to be your friend anyway, hear that? I want your heart! It's mine! You owe me for all the crap you've put me through!" He shouts. The truth is raging in his chest makes him free, gets him high and he kicks Billy in the shin for good measure.

"Fuck, Harrington! Are you nuts?!" Billy looks completely bewildered by Steve's outburst.

"So what? You did that to me!" he sniffs "You think you can tease me and bully me and kiss me and touch me and make me feel this way and not face the consequences?"

"I didn't know you..."

"Well, then you're an idiot, Billy Hargrove!" he gives him another kick but not as hard this time, it's more of a nudge actually "...and just for the record, if I see you talking to that bitch again, I'll kill you both." Steve really needed to get that one off his chest. Damn that felt good.

"Jesus..." Billy shakes his head in disbelief "Didn't think you were the jealous type."

"Course you did, asshole. I know what you tried there." Steve pouts, his tears have dried up now that the words are out "Stop playing with me."

Billy goes still, studies Steve's face, his eyes intent. Then he pulls him closer with a gentle tug. He brushes his lips against Steve's ever so softly, like he's testing the waters. Steve makes him wait a bit, because he can and because he feels like he too deserves to savour the smallest taste of revenge for once. But then he opens his lips for Billy's and they lock them in a gentle kiss. It's intimate and sweet, almost chaste if Billy wasn't so clever with his tongue. This is different than the first time, they both know that. It's not a spur of the moment thing. It's a gesture of devotion and forgiveness, a wordless promise, it makes Steve tremble.

"I'm sorry." Billy whispers when they pull apart and closes his eyes so

Steve can marvel at his long beautiful lashes. "I've never wanted anyone as much as I want you."

"How long?" Steve knows the answer, he's maybe not the sharpest tool in the shed but finally he sees clearly. But he wants to hear it from Billy.

"Forever. Since the first time I saw you."

"Dammit Hargrove, you did a real shit job at showing that."

"Yeah?" Billy looks at him again, there's a devious little smile on his lips and a spark in his eyes. "Maybe you're just dense?"

Steve wriggles his wrists out of Billy's grasp and runs his hands through the other boy's hair, pulling it back from his face. It's so nice to finally see something else than anger or mockery in his eyes. He looks younger like that, almost cute.

"Hm yeah, sure. The beating you gave me at the Byer's house should have been a dead giveaway, right." He tugs on Billy's curls.

"It's not like I could've just ripped off your clothes and have my way with you in front of all the kids, Steve." Billy rolls his eyes in fake indignation.

Now that's an image to savour. Steve turns bright red at the implication of what Billy's wanted to do with him all this time. What he still wants. But Steve's honestly pretty damn flattered as well... in what he's ready to admit is a very fucked up way. His reaction apparently speaks for itself because the other boy gives him a smug little smile.

"I can make up for it, you know? All nice and pretty. If you let me." Billy purrs, his voice significantly lower, his eyes darker. His hands slip under Steve's shirt and travel up his spine. They're broad and warm and they feel a little rough against Steve's soft skin, just like he remembers them. They feel amazing. "I can spoil you a little bit. The way you like it, princess."

He tenderly kisses Steve's brow where the last cut is almost healed and the faint yellow of the bruises is fading. Billy is right, Steve likes

that, the gentle caress, the sweet words. They soothe the tumult in his heart and make the venom they've poured taste less bitter.

Steve closes his eyes.

"Spoil me." He says "Spoil me rotten."

Notes for the Chapter:

Aaaah I'm sorry I'm being a tease! But I'm saving the smut for the last chapter not only because this chapter was emotionally straining to write but also because it was getting too long. ^~;

I hope you enjoyed it anyway! If you did, please consider leaving a kudos or a comment. Support is everything and I really value yours! Thank you so much! ♥

Side Note: In the unlikely case you're interested in original fiction and/or crummy poetry, I have a [wattpad](#) I'm too stupid to use but still post on once in a while. Also, there's my criminally neglected [80s aesthetics tumblr](#), recently revived for Harringrove purposes and open for asks and occasional prompts. Fic updates will go there as well.